

mation between computer system 200 and computer operator (s). Another type of user input device is cursor control device 223, such as a conventional mouse, touch mouse, trackball, a finger or other type of cursor for communicating information between system 200 and user(s). Communication device 225 is coupled to bus 211 for accessing information from remote computers or servers, such as server 104 or other computers, through wide-area network. Communication device 225 may include a modem or a wireless network interface device, or other similar devices that facilitate communication between computer 200 and the network.

[0060] FIG. 3 is a side-view block diagram illustrating a structure of a flexible displaying device 300 having multiple layers in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. Flexible displaying device 300 includes a flexible touch sensitive surface 302, a first flexible actuator layer 304, a flexible display 306, a second flexible actuator layer 308, and a flexible circuitry layer 310. It should be noted that the thickness of each layer is not drawn to scale. Flexible touch sensitive surface 302, which is deposited over flexible display 306, is capable of receiving inputs from a user. Flexible touch sensitive surface 302, in one embodiment, is substantially transparent thereby the contents displayed by flexible display 306 can be viewed through flexible touch sensitive surface 302. As discussed earlier, flexible touch sensitive surface 302 is divided into multiple regions, wherein each region is configured to represent a specific function. For example, if a displaying image shown behind a region is a symbol of "quit", the current application is terminated if the region showing the "quit" symbol is touched. In an alternative embodiment, flexible touch sensitive surface 302, first flexible actuator layer 304, flexible display 306, second flexible actuator layer 308, and/or flexible circuitry layer 310 are combined and/or integrated into a single flexible touch sensitive display device.

[0061] Flexible actuator layer 304, in one embodiment, is placed between flexible touch sensitive surface 302 and flexible display 306 for generating haptic feedback. As mentioned earlier, flexible actuator layer 304 can be composed of EAPs, piezoelectric elements, and/or SMA. For example, thin strips of piezoceramic (or piezoelectric), SMA, and/or EAP may be interlaced with flexible display 306 or flexible touch sensitive surface 302 or both for creating haptic sensation. The strips of flexible actuator can either be made in a layer or multiple individual strips. Alternatively, the strips could be placed on the back side of flexible display 306 as flexible actuator layer 308. It should be noted that flexible actuator layer 308 and flexible actuator layer 304 can be substantially the same layer. Alternatively, one of flexible actuator layers 304 and 308 may be required in flexible display device 300. If the strips are anchored at several places on flexible display 306, the strips would create a vibration when they are activated. A single or multiple strips may be used to vibrate entire flexible display 306.

[0062] Flexible display 306 can either be a rollable display, a foldable display, or a bendable display. Flexible display 306, also known as an electronic paper, an e-paper, a digital paper, an electronic ink, electronic reusable paper, or a power paper, is capable of displaying images and capable of maintaining the images with limited power consumption. It should be noted that the physical property of flexibility of flexible display 306, flexible touch sensitive surface 302, and flexible circuitry layer 310 are substantially similar thereby they can be folded, rolled, or bent at the substantially same rate.

[0063] Flexible circuitry layer 310 includes various processing and computing components as discussed in FIG. 2. In one embodiment, upon receipt of input from flexible touch sensitive surface 302, flexible circuitry 310 receives the input signal via connection 324. Flexible circuitry 310 processes the input information and initiates haptic feedback in response to the input information via connection 320. Flexible display 306 receives image information for displaying from flexible circuitry 310 via connection 322. It should be noted that flexible display device 300 may contain other layers but they are not necessary to understand the present invention.

[0064] FIG. 4 illustrates a thin strip of flexible actuator 402 attached to a flexible display 400 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The thin strip of flexible actuator 402 may be a strip of piezoelectric element or a fiber of SMA or EAP. In one embodiment, the fibers are very fine and they are almost invisible. Alternatively, the fibers can be made by the materials almost transparent or clear thereby the image from the flexible display can penetrate the fibers or a fiber layer.

[0065] Fiber 402 expands and contracts depending on the voltage applied. In one embodiment, when fiber 402 is activated, the entire screen vibrates. For example, the similar actuator materials can be used to local deform or bend the entire flexible screen. A fiber of SMA, for instance, decreases in length when it is activated. If an SMA fiber 402 is attached to both ends of display 400, fiber 402 can pull both ends of the flexible display 400 together and consequently flexible display 400 bows as shown bent flexible display 404. Depending on the amount of actuation the bowing can be macroscopic or perceived as a vibration.

[0066] FIG. 5 illustrates an alternative embodiment of a flexible display device 500 having flexible actuators in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. Flexible display device 500 includes multiple strips (or fibers) of flexible actuators 510-514, which could be piezoelectric elements, SMA fibers, EAP nanotubes, or a combination of piezoelectric elements, SMA and EAP fibers. Each of multiple fibers 510-514 anchors (or attaches) at a different point of flexible display 504, and consequently, each of multiple fibers 510-514 delivers a unique vibrating function. For example, when fiber 514 shrinks (or contracts) due to the application of voltage, the middle portion of flexible display 504 starts to buckle (or warp). On the other hand, when fiber 512 shrinks, a portion of flexible display 504 buckles and causes various vibrations. The edge of flexible display 504 buckles when fiber 510 is activated. It should be noted that various different patterns of fibers can be anchored to flexible display 504 to achieve different haptic sensation.

[0067] Flexible display device 502 illustrates an alternative layout of various fibers to achieve the same or similar haptic sensations or feedback. Various fibers 522 are anchored along the edge of flexible display 506 and the advantage of this layout is to reduce the interference of image displayed in a display window 520. A unique fiber 522 or a combination of fibers 522 may be activated to generate a predefined haptic feedback. It should be noted that other types of layouts are available such as mesh design to achieve specific haptic feedback sensation.

[0068] The present invention includes various processing steps, which will be described below. The steps of the present invention may be embodied in machine or computer executable instructions. The instructions can be used to cause a